614 lineages which is more marked as the Fang become unattached
578 conquerors. In the same way frequent examples have been given
621 of extensive agglomerations being broken up after the death of the "chief" who had founded and maintained them. The size and cohesion of the groupings appear therefore in a large measure to depend on the personality of the leaders who have asserted themselves (for any rightful succession may be contested under pretext of incapacity, or it may be refused) and on circumstances. This explains in part the frequency of fissions observed by various authors at the level of the third or fourth generation. (1) The size

1. Particularly, E. Trezenem, "Notes ethnographiques sur les tribus Fan du Moyen-Ogooué [Ethnographic Notes on the Fang Tribes of the Middle Ogooué]," op. cit.

of localized groupings may therefore vary a great deal – especially since the pacification of the country – going from the major lineage expressed in "clan patches" to the minor lineage (nd'è bòt) forming an isolated hamlet.

Kinship

612 Our analysis of Fang society has so far considered groupings only in terms of two fundamental elements: paternal filiation and real fraternity. We must now examine the bonds created and the relations prescribed by other modalities of kinship, as well as by the alliances that may exist between "foreign" groupings as a result of marriages.

612 Through the medium of his father (ésa, whom he calls taga)
601 and of his mother (nya, whom he calls nanö), the individual belongs to two kinship groupings, the paternal (ésinyâg) and the maternal (dzânanö). For the young Fang these two have neither the same significance nor the same importance. [114] The course of his life will generally be spent in the midst of the first group, while he has only incidental relations with the "relatives." of the second group. It is from the first that he receives his clan affiliation. The fundamental relations of paternal kinship are governed,

612 as we have maintained, in terms of filiation — the term émò,
601 with a qualifying word indicating the filiation: thus émò wàm, my son — and in terms of "fraternity," the term mwanö indicating the descendants found in the same segment. From these two coordinates, some of the relationships can be represented as follows:

Table VI

Generations	Designations in the vertical direction	Designations in the horizontal direction
X	Mvam (sg)	
I	Mvam (sg)	
II	Esa (sg)	
III	Mwanö (sg)	Bobéñâg (pl)
IV	Bèndè (pl)	Bobéñâg (pl)
V	Nwabâg (col)	Bobézâg (pl)
Y	Nwagbâg (col)	Mwan'ayôg (sg)

Abbreviations: sg, singular; pl, plural; col, collective.

In the first place it seems that the word mvam, used specifically for the grandfather and the forefather, has a very general meaning. It is applied to the great-uncle and to both the ancestor of the direct line of descent and those of the collateral lines. According to Trilles mvam "is derived from a root va, which implies not the idea of a generation, which is sa or ba, 'to plant,' but of production, increase, growth. . . ." (1) The mvam, living or dead

1. Father H. Trilles, op. cit., p. 88.

who may be at the same time ancestors and guardian beings, constitute in an indistinct way the ngibâg, or ancestry. This voluntary
612 confusion of terminology, being a sort of throwback into the past
601 in the defunct part of the clan grouping, should be connected with
888 the Fang custom of keeping the old men away from public life and reducing them to a sort of marginal life. (2) In the same way,

2. Ibid., p. 106, "The white-haired old

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[888]

> man is rarely esteemed in the Fang country. As soon as he no longer has the strength to carry a gun, he receives no consideration, and of his own accord he adapts himself to this role, joking and playing at every turn."

the fourth generation assures [115] the passage into the midst of the confused grouping called nwabâg, which, while specifically designating the great-grandchildren, also signifies progeny, the whole of the descendants related in an unspecified way, who are to one another mwanézâg (plural, bobézâg), a term that could be translated as "brother of the same lineage" or simply as "relative." This passage which occurs at the first and fourth generations indicates the privileged position given to two intermediary generations, that of the ésa (father) and that of the mwanõ (son). In the case of this conquering people who rated their villages only by the number of its warriors, this fact must be linked to the importance given socially to the "man in his full strength" nyamõrõ (1), — and

> 1. Ibid., p. 106, "Mur means 'personality' and the particle nya indicates the idea of plenitude or superiority, Our French word 'maître' [master] corresponds fairly well to this meaning."

to "the man who has become adult" — ékwar. On these two generations is based the framework of traditional Fang society.

On the other hand, the strong fraternity expressed by the notion of mwanénâg (2) survives only to the third generation with

> 2. Father Trilles writes that this term "indicates real kinship or filiation and not by adoption or blood brotherhood . . . ," op. cit., p. 251.

respect to a common mvam (grandfather). (3) The order of

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3. An expression frequently heard during our investigations was: "They had the same mvam, therefore they belonged to the same nd'è bòt."

succession confirms this fact by retaining in the collateral lines of descent only "first cousins" and paternal nephews (émò mwanẽ̂ãg, son of mwanénãg) of the deceased. (4) Apart from the individual

4. Cf. M. Bertaut, Le Drout coutumier dès Boulous [Common Law of the Boulou], chapter, "Successions," and L. Mba, Essai de droit coutumier pahouin [Essay on Pahouin Common Law], p. 39.

family which has no independent existence, it is in relation to this kinship that the most coherent and restricted grouping of Fang society, the nd'è bòt, is organized. This assures the cohesion of such a grouping but also contributes, in quite the opposite direction, with the relaxing of effective kinship, to the cleavages which occur frequently in the fourth generation.

612 Important distinctions should be marked on the same hori-
601 zontal segment. First of all in terms of sex, between brother
561 (ndum) and sister (kal). These two terms have a very broad meaning, since, according to L. Martrou, they may mean by extension "village brother" and "daughter [or girl] of the same village." (5)

5. L. Martrou, Lexique [Lexicon].

In terms of birth, children born of the same mother (of the same womb, abum avòri) form a distinct group called abumò bòt. No privilege however is [116] granted the siblings, this qualification most frequently being specified only by a periphrase, mwanẽ̂ãg abum avòri, "brother from the same womb." Above all, in terms of seniority, the eldest, ntòl or nyamòrò, takes precedence over the younger brother, ndzimõ. This pre-eminence is fundamental and is of the same order as that which subordinates the generation

612 of mwanó to that of the ésa. The eldest son is not only almost
601 the exclusive heir to property – "he inherits at least seven tenths,"
561 writes Mr. Bertaut – but he also has religious privileges. He is the sole guardian of the skulls of ancestors, and he has political privileges, if he shows himself sufficiently able.

601 Within the maternal kinship the most important relations are
608 those between nephew (mwanõ kal) and maternal uncle (nya-nduma). Of this we have proof in an early study of the Fang of the N'Djolé region, and in a recent document written at the time of a clan gathering which shows the maintenance of some of these relations. Captain Curault (1) refers to them in a precise manner in his

1. Captain Curault, "Monographie du secteur de N'Djolé au Gabon" [Monograph on the N'Djolé Sector in Gabon], Revue des Troupes Coloniales, 68, February, 1908.

monograph on the N'Djolé sector: "The relations between uncle and nephew are very close; during his life the nephew gives his uncle a great many presents to increase still further the price paid to his uncle for his mother. In the same way, whenever his nephew pays him a visit, the uncle kills a chicken for him, etc... as does the father-in-law for his son-in-law. ... If a poor nephew needs goods to pay for a palaver or to get married, he can go to his uncle, sure that he will receive help from him, even if he has not often given him presents. It is a supreme shame for a man
[428] to send away the son of his sister with empty hands." Maternal uncle and nephew have a share in the inheritance. An official report of the clan gathering of the Yémisèm-Éba still provides in 1948 for the "indemnity" due at the time of the death of a nya-ñduma (a sum corresponding to the value of a woman and a sheep) and on the death of a mwanõ-kal (a slightly smaller sum, "varying according to the size of the inheritance," and a sheep). (2)

2. Réunion de 25 villages de la tribu Yémissem a Afénane (District d'Oyem) du 12 an 19 Juillet, 1948 [Gathering of 25 villages of the Yémissem tribe at

601 kinship with descent through the women, i.e., through paternal aunts (the term sôna having a descriptive equivalent, kal ésuð, father's sister), maternal aunts (to whom is applied symmetrically the term sôna), and sisters (kal). But its meaning can be broadened to include, as Martrou states, "any child whose mother is a native of the village or the tribe." When the emphasis is on the closest kinship, in each class the term is used with the word fogo, which means "true" and which has a quality of accentuation. Thus mwanéñâg fogo would be translated "brother by the same father." While the mwanéñâg group refers essentially to paternal filiation, the mwanõkal group points to descent through sisters, and the system of distribution of bride prices. They have in a way a complementary existence and are associated with the mechanism which allows the establishment of the couple and the procreation of posterity. The one [latter] may remedy the decay of the other [former]. Curault [118] points this out by using a case already quoted: "An orphan who does not get on with his father's brothers seeks a "brother" in his maternal uncle or in the husband of his paternal aunt, or in the son of his sister, if the latter is much older than he and already the mother of full-grown men." There is therefore a recourse to be had for anyone who, as an exception, wants to escape from the authority unjustly employed by the "chief" of his nd'è bòt.

612 This account of the principal aspects of kinship shows fairly well that, while granting first place to the "paternals," Fang society also acknowledges the "maternals" by attributing important roles to them. (1) This double recognition is confirmed by the

1. M. H. Kingsley had already stressed this important fact. Cf. Travels in West Africa, London, 1897, in which she writes: "Among the Fang, kinship is recognized both on the side of the father and of the mother, and is not limited as among the Galwa by immediate sanguinity."

obligation of double exogamy. It is forbidden to marry a woman

612 belonging to the clan of the father or the mother (or belonging to a clan connected by marriage to either when the common origin is still known). We have already pointed out certain circumstances in which maternal kinship is effective. It should be remembered that this maternal kinship manifests itself from childhood on by obligating the mwanõ kal to visit his nya-nduma(s), that it is able to receive the right of guardianship, to collect the bride price, and to benefit from an inheritance (in addition to compensation normally provided at the time of a maternal nephew's death) by substituting for a vanished paternal kinship, and that it shares along with the relatives by marriage (abè) in the various phases of funeral ceremonies and mourning. This fact suggests that the power of the maternal kinship, while remaining subordinate, is recognized in this way to strengthen the power of "alliances" created by marriage. Those related to the father by marriage are the nya-nduma of his immediate descendants. In this way the bonds essential to the existence of traditional Fang society are consolidated.

Marriage and Alliances

581 554 The first explorers, Du Chaillu and M. H. Kingsley, did not fail to point out the important role of relations set up by means of the numerous marriages among foreign groupings. Father Trilles, in his study made at the beginning of this century, also pointed out the personal advantages connected with a network [119] of alliances opened up through the interplay of marriages. He writes: "The Fang will therefore marry a girl in order to secure alliances in other tribes, to acquire greater influence by having more men attached to him by the ties of blood." (1) All researchers emphasize definitely

1. Father Trilles, "Proverbes, légendes et contes Fang [Fang Sayings, Legends and Tales]," Bulletin de la Société Neuchâteloise de Géographie, 1905, pp. 49-295.

two social consequences of marriage: the increase of personal prestige and the increase of the strength of the family group.

581 554 These facts should be complemented by specifying the particular 562 value attributed by every Fang to the "possession" of several wives